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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

Statement submitted by African Action on AIDS, Associated Country Women of the World, Association for the Study of the World Refugee Problem, Center for Women, the Earth, the Divine, European Union of Women, Hadassah, International Alliance of Women, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Council of Women, International Council of Jewish Women, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation of Social Workers, International Federation of University Women, International Inner Wheel, National Council of German Women's Organizations, Pan Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association, Salvation Army, Servas International, Socialist International Women, Soroptimist International, Third World Movement against the Exploitation of Women, Women's International Zionist Organization, Women's Zionist Organization of America, Women's Federation for World Peace International, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

We, the undersigned international and national non-governmental organisations in consultative status with ECOSOC, members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, present to the 52nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women the following statement for information and consideration:

Financing

The right to equality and the principle of non-discrimination are among the most fundamental elements of human rights. The empowerment of women and autonomy of women are essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration. The empowerment and autonomy of women are equally essential for achieving a society in which women and men are equal. However, women worldwide continue to suffer from all forms of discrimination and all too often from a complete lack of power, in particular the power of political participation and of decision-making in macro-economic policies. First and foremost, the strengthening of the UN Gender Architecture with a strong operational mandate at the country level to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women – and in particular the economic empowerment - at the local level has to become reality.

We, the members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, support the message of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women/New York to the Expert Group Meeting held in Oslo, in September 2007. In particular we wish to reiterate the need to tackle the critical issues, such as the invisibility of women's work in national budgets, economic costs of HIV/AIDS and tobacco, and poverty related to older women and the girl-child. To these critical issues we wish to add concerns for the situation of rural women.

Rural women are responsible for the largest part of rural and agricultural work, but do not constitute the majority of resource owners. According to FAO, women produce more than 50% of the food cultivated on the planet. Further to this, 70% of the poor in rural areas are women. They are experiencing progressive poverty by having less access to resources such as land, technology, markets, credit facilities and training, as well as to social services, such as education and healthcare.

We, the members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, urge governments

- To finance mentoring programmes for women in leadership skills, especially in the political arena, thus making use of the examples and experiences of women in high positions;

- To develop and implement policies and adequately resourced programmes to integrate, train and encourage women to participate in public life. These policies would include organisational, educational and logistical measures to allow women to lead a self-determined life;

- To progressively redirect at least 5% of national military expenditure to health, education and employment programmes aimed at eliminating gender disparity in society and empowering women through the promotion and protection of their political, social and economic rights;

- To implement the dual approach of gender mainstreaming and positive action in all policies, programmes and budgets, in order to clearly identify their effects on women and men;

- To focus on the economic empowerment of rural women and to allocate the necessary budgetary resources.

Peace

The Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security unanimously adopted on October 31 2000 (SCR 1325) represents a landmark in the fight for the recognition of the need to ensure the full and effective participation of women in such processes and at all levels. It also embodies the responsibility of its implementation throughout the UN System, in both its norm-setting and operational roles and activities.

In the course of the ongoing discussions concerning the UN gender architecture and women's machineries, the undersigned NGOs maintain that the systematic under-resourcing and the low priority given to gender equality policies, programme and activities have profound impacts on the effective implementation of SCR 1325, with grave consequences for the lives of women and girls everywhere, and especially in situations of violent conflict.

The undersigned international and national non-governmental organisations in consultative status with ECOSOC, members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women therefore urge UN member states

- To strengthen and improve the implementation of SCR 1325 within the UN system, i.e. through the establishment of an independent, well-resourced women-specific entity with adequate stature, normative, operational and oversight capacity, led by an Under-Secretary General, and with a mandate to drive the peace agenda at all levels;

- To systematically conduct gender training, including about SCR 1325 within all UN headquarters and field staff;

- To ensure women's participation within the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in the formulation and implementation of peacebuilding strategies, and to adequately resource women-specific projects, through the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund.

The undersigned international and national non-governmental organisations in consultative status with ECOSOC, members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women therefore urge governments;

- To develop national action plans for a speedy implementation of SRC 1325;
- To develop national rosters of potential women candidates for positions in the area of conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation processes, in particular for senior management position;
- To actively encourage the recruitment of women to field presences;
- To encourage and finance relevant training and educational programmes focusing on women and girls;
- To empower women's organisations and peace initiatives, including adequate funding.